



# **FIRE-SAFE IN TENNESSEE**

**The Tennessee State Fire Marshal's Office**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **State Fire Marshal: Teach children fire safety at an early age**

**NASHVILLE, TN** – Every day, Americans experience the tragedy of a residential fire. According to the U.S. Fire Administration, more than 3,500 Americans die and approximately 18,300 are injured annually in fires. One of the primary causes of residential fire deaths and injuries for children under 10 is playing with a heat source, which includes lighters and matches.

"We urge parents to teach children at an early age about the dangers of playing with fire, to prevent child injuries, fire deaths and fire-setting behavior," State Fire Marshal and Commerce & Insurance Commissioner Julie Mix McPeak says. "If your child expresses curiosity about fire or has been playing with fire, calmly but firmly explain the dangers and that matches and lighters are tools for adults only."

Since 2010, nearly 60 structure fires in Tennessee have resulted from children playing with fire; one such fire claimed the life of a 2-year-old boy in Union County last year. In 2008, Tennessee banned the sale of novelty lighters in the state. These lighters usually resemble cartoon characters, toys, guns, watches, musical instruments, and animals, and often include entertaining audio and visual effects. They pose a serious fire hazard, especially in the hands of children who mistake them for toys. Toy-like or novelty lighters have been responsible for injuries, deaths, and accidents across the nation.

Below are some facts about children and fire safety. Teach your children the importance of fire-safe habits, and practice a home fire escape plan with them today.

### **Curious kids set fires**

- Children 14 and under make up 10-15 percent of all fire deaths.
- Fifty-two percent of all child fire deaths occur involve those under 5. These children are usually unable to escape from a fire independently.
- At home, children often play with fire in bedrooms, in closets and under beds to avoid detection. These locations just so happen to contain a lot of flammable materials.
- Too often, child fire-setters are not given proper guidance and supervision by parents and teachers. Consequently, they repeat their fire-setting behavior.

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## Practice fire safety in your home

- Supervise young children closely. Do not leave them alone, even for short periods of time.
- Keep matches and lighters in a locked drawer or cabinet, high out of the reach children.
- Purchase and use only child-resistant lighters. Lighters that look like toys can confuse children and cause fires, injuries, and death. Again, they are prohibited in Tennessee. Do not buy or use them.
- Teach young children to never touch matches and lighters, and to tell a grownup if they find them.
- Take the mystery out of fire by teaching children that fire is a tool for adults, not a toy for children. Never use lighters or matches as a source of amusement for children; they may try to do the same.
- Check under beds and in closets for burned matches, evidence your child might be playing with fire.
- Develop a home fire escape plan, practice it with your children and designate a safe meeting place outside your residence.
- Teach children not to hide from firefighters but to get out quickly and call for help from another location.
- Show children how to crawl on the floor below smoke, to get out of the home and stay out.
- Demonstrate how to stop, drop to the ground and roll if their clothes catch fire.
- Install smoke alarms in every sleeping room, outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home, including the basement. Familiarize children with the sound of smoke alarms. Test smoke alarms each month and replace their batteries according to manufacturer's instructions. Daylight saving time changes, in the fall and spring, are great times to replace smoke alarm batteries if they are not 10-year batteries.
- Entirely replace any smoke alarm that is at least 10 years old.

For more information on making your home fire-safe, download and print the State Fire Marshal's Office home fire safety checklist (<http://tn.gov/fire/fsk/documents/checklist.pdf>). The State Fire Marshal's Office also may be contacted at 615-741-2981.

The State Fire Marshal's Office ([www.tn.gov/commerce/sfm/](http://www.tn.gov/commerce/sfm/)) is a division of the Department of Commerce and Insurance ([www.tn.gov/commerce/](http://www.tn.gov/commerce/)), which works to protect consumers while ensuring fair competition for industries and professionals who do business in Tennessee. [www.tn.gov/commerce/](http://www.tn.gov/commerce/), [@TNCommerceInsur](https://twitter.com/TNCommerceInsur) (Twitter), [http://on.fb.me/uFQwUZ](https://on.fb.me/uFQwUZ) (Facebook), <http://bit.ly/ry1GyX> (YouTube)

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